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UNCLAS LILONGWE 000585

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
DEPT FOR OES/PCI
GABORONE FOR REO T. PIERCE
DEPT OF INTERIOR FOR USBR/INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS - M. HOOD

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ELECTRICITY CORPORATION TO MANAGE AQUATIC WEEDS

REF: LILONGWE 45

1. (U) In an attempt to reduce load-shedding and power cuts caused by aquatic weeds clogging hydroelectric power stations, the Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi, Limited (ESCOM) has purchased a USD 795,000 aquatic weeds control system from American corporation Aquarius Systems (Aquarius). ESCOM, which recently took over management of the weed problem for the Ministry of Transport and Public Works, had been paying approximately USD 26,000 per month to remove and dispose of the weeds. ESCOM officials have said they see the purchase of the AS equipment as a medium-term answer to the problem, and they will continue to advocate for the GOM to seek a sustainable solution.

2. (SBU) Aquarius representatives, whom post alerted to the situation in 2001, have confirmed that ESCOM plans to purchase a Swamp Devil Aquatic Vegetation Cutter, H-620 Aquatic Plant Harvester, a trailer conveyor, shore conveyor, boom material, spare parts, work boat, truck, and three months on-site training. The equipment, according to Aquarius, has a lifetime of at least 10 years, if properly maintained. Aquarius representatives also said ESCOM is planning to use an Ex-Im Bank financing for one year, which they are organizing through an American bank in Milwaukee.

COMMENT

3. (SBU) Continued load-shedding and blackouts have hindered economic development, and ESCOM's decision to engage more fully on this critical situation will provide much needed stability to Malawi's energy supply problems. Post, however, still sees OES's pending Integrated Management of the Lake Malawi/Niassa/Nyasa Basin as an opportunity to find a long-term, sustainable solution to this problem, while also promoting general cooperation and coordination among the three nations bordering the lake. END COMMENT.
RASPOLIC